

The Nigerian Teacher Education Industry: Gaps, Challenges and Prospects

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I. Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that teachers are the most important factor required by societies for realising their political, economic, technological, moral and social developmental objectives, and aspirations. Teachers are responsible for training other professionals, namely - scientists, lawyers, technocrats, military officers, engineers, medical doctors and politicians. Hence, any discussion on the teacher education industry in Nigeria would necessarily demand an x-ray of what exactly do we mean by teacher education; where did it start from; what did we do right; what did we do wrong; where are we now; and where do we intend to be in the industry in the nearest future.

Attempt to provide answers to all these posers will effectively guide us to understand better, the gaps, challenges and prospects of the teacher education industry in Nigeria, which is the focus of this presentation.

II. The Teacher Education Industry in Nigeria: A Brief History

Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of the proficiency and competence of teachers for the purpose of empowering them to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. It encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills.

A meaningful but tangible discussion of the history of teacher education industry in Nigeria could be segmented into:

1. Teacher-Education in Pre-Independence Nigeria;
2. Teacher Education in Independence Nigeria; and
3. Teacher Education in Post-Independence Nigeria

III. Teacher education in pre-Independence Nigeria

Any historical review of teacher education development in Nigeria from 1890 would normally cover the periods of experimentation, reorganisation, and consolidation.

The missionaries played a great role in the development of teacher education in the pre-independence Nigeria, especially through their church missions such as the Wesleyan Methodist, the Church Missionary Society, the Baptist, the Roman Catholic and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) between 1842 and 1860.

Special arrangement was evolved for training teachers through a training programme described by Adeyinka (1971) as a pupil-teacher system. It involved the missionary teacher in a kind of residential training of the pupils leaving with the teacher and upon completion of Standard V examination; they are recruited as teachers to receive one-hour daily instruction from the head teacher on how to teach (Jekayinfa, 2011).

A quick review of the kind of training provided by these church missions revealed that it was not satisfactory as it prepared beneficiaries for relative routine tasks instead of professional role as distinct practitioners. Subsequently, teacher-training institutions were established; first in Abeokuta in 1859 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), in Oyo 1896, Ogbomoso in 1897 by the Baptist, Ibadan in 1905 by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society, and Nassarawa in the North in 1909, by the British Government.

Efforts at developing teacher education in pre-independence Nigeria continued in 1925 with Phelps-Stokes Commission Report which strongly criticized the teacher training system being delivered by the Missionaries. Specifically, it reported that the Missions did not understand the purpose of African Education and there was need to re-orientate and reorganise the teacher education system.

This later led to the establishment of Elementary Training Colleges for lower primary school teachers for the award of Grade III teacher's certificate, and the Higher Elementary Training College for the award of Grade II teachers' certificate. These two programmes continued running till independence, and by early 1957, the University of Ibadan had started running one-year course for graduates leading to a Diploma of Education Certificate.

Teacher education in the Independence Nigeria

At independence, Nigeria did not have a teacher training college that was awarding certificates higher than diploma and Grade I Teacher's Certificates. However, with the report of Sir Eric Ashby Commission, which prescribed education as a tool for national economic expansion. Tertiary institutions were established and these included, 5 universities, and the upgrading of Grade I Teachers College to Nigeria Certificate in Education awarding college. The universities started running B.A. Ed, B.Sc. Ed. And B.Ed.

Other issues relating to inadequacy, poor qualification and non-certification of teachers began to be addressed and training of more teachers for the nation's secondary schools was recommended.

Jekayinfa (2011) further reported that the decade following the attainment of independence by Nigeria was one of rapid expansion of teacher education facilities. That decade, she emphasised, ended with the evolution of a National Curriculum Conference in 1969. The report of the Conference spelt out the objectives and contents of all levels of education including teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher education in post independence Nigeria

The report of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference can be described as one report that provided the basis for the first National Policy on Education of 1977, which has since been revised severally.

The National Policy on Education opened a new page in the development of teacher education in Nigeria, as it emphasised that all teachers in the nation's educational institutions were to be professionally trained. This facilitated the establishment of training colleges for teachers with conscious efforts at categorising them.

Prior to this development in the teacher education sector, there had been a mass training of over 160,000 teachers who were expected to handle the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Scheme introduced in September 1974. The mass teacher-training programme had four categories, which included:

- One –year course for holders of West African School Certificate (WASC)
- Two-year course for those who attempted WASC examination but failed or those with deficiencies in Grade III Teacher's Certificate
- Three-year course for holders of Modern III Certificate or S.75 Certificate
- Five-year course for holders of Primary Six leaving Certificate

This mass training programme however had relative success due to planners' inability to source and provide the correct data required for effective programme planning and implementation.

Nevertheless, it is important to remark that things later improved with the end of the UPE Scheme. More concerted efforts and concrete actions have evolved for further development of the teacher education industry in Nigeria. The teachers Grade II Colleges have since been scrapped. More Colleges of Education; Federal, State and Private have been established, approved and licensed to operate. At least as at Y2017, there are sixty-one (61) Federal and State Colleges of Education, about 20 private-owned ones and 7 Polytechnics offering Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programmes.

The National Commission for Colleges of Education; the superintending agency for all these Colleges of Education in Nigeria has also in recent times introduced key reforms in teacher education at this level, with the introduction of its new Specialist NCE Teacher Curriculum, the implementation of which commenced in October 2013.

Earlier, a National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) was developed in 2009, and it is aimed at enhancing the production of quality, skilled, knowledgeable and creative teachers who are able to raise a generation of students that can compete globally, based on explicit performance standards (FME, 2009).

As part of its efforts at promoting professional development, the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the promulgation of Act 31, of May 1993, established the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) as a Federal Government agency mandated among others to register and license qualified teachers to practice, with NCE as the minimum qualification for registration. This has been further complemented with the newly introduced Professional Diploma in Education programme run by some universities and colleges of education in Nigeria in collaboration with the TRCN to further improve the quality of teachers who were employed without teaching qualification.

IV. Noticed Gaps in Nigeria's Teacher Education Industry

V.

In spite of all these developmental efforts, one would still want to observe that the major problems in the teacher education industry since independence have included but not limited to the issue of the reluctant teacher, dwindling subscription for teacher education, low output of teachers, and issue of quality pre-service teacher education which has been characterised over time by poor quality of teachers produced.

A review of the atmosphere of the teacher education industry In Nigeria revealed some gaps that needed to be filled in order to make the industry more dynamic and functionally beneficial to both the pre-service and in-service teachers as well as their students. These are presented in Table 1 as adapted from Obayan (2008).

Elements of the Atmosphere	Noticed Gaps
Recruitment into teacher education programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prevailing mind set that says ‘come over to education when other options fail’. That is, students who end up offering education as a course are mainly those whose cut-off marks do not secure them a place in the course of their first or second choice. It is an established fact that faculties of education are populated by “rejects” who have no interest in the profession they are being trained in.
Curriculum for initial (pre-career) teacher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow, for the demands of a knowledge economy • Lacks the scope of ICT to personalise the curriculum, to help support trainees’ progress and to encourage problem solving activities individually and in groups • Skill gap in digital literacy among the trainers and the trainees. • Unrelated to work place demands with less input from professional bodies • Unreliable work place exposure. • Lack of a conscious effort at integrating inclusive education component in the teacher preparation curriculum.
Teacher Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not exemplars of teaching methods. • They are not good role models to their students. • Limited knowledge and familiarity with developments in teacher education. • Limited closeness to school and classroom realities.
Implicit Professional Education Curriculum/Quality of Pre-service Teacher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality control measures that would help determine the extent to which prescribed standards are being achieved are relatively lacking. • The way teaching practice supervision is conducted. (not too thorough).
The Reluctant Teacher versus the Teacher to Remember	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There seems to be more reluctant teachers, that is, those who often avoid students, who are averse to change and are not committed, than the teacher to remember, that is, the adaptor, the communicator, the risk taker, a role model and change agent.
Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based solely on ‘academic’ examinations (tutelage/internship non-existent), although there exists a National Teacher Education Policy, the implementation of which could help address these gaps.
Career-long personal and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undue emphasis on courses leading to formal academic qualifications. • Absence of a system of systematic studies of the learning needs of practising teachers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal development not considered an important area of need.• Absence of systematic preparation for leadership roles in the system.• Teachers' lack of opportunities in understanding techniques for appropriating right approaches and methodologies for transmitting different knowledge areas of contents, because they lack continuing professional development and further interaction among colleagues for understanding the knowledge of contemporary developments in various knowledge areas.
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Table 1: Gaps identified in Nigeria's teacher education industry

This kind of atmosphere cannot but have some serious implications for the teacher education industry as a key player in Nigeria's socio-economic development. These gaps, if unaddressed cannot assure the teacher education industry what Braimoh (2010) described as the achievement of total quality management (TQM). He maintained that it is only when all the elements in quality control are accomplished, with a satisfactory feedback and evaluation from the consumers, that quality service delivery can be assured.

With these gaps properly addressed, it is expected that the teacher education industry would make its recipients, that is, the teachers, more responsive and sensitive to, the social contexts of education, the various disparities in the background of learners in the macro national and global contexts, & the goals of equity, parity and social justice. But this has been quite difficult because of some challenges, which the industry has been facing in Nigeria over the years, in spite of the various reforms in the Sector.

V. Challenges of the Teacher Education Industry in Nigeria

Lawal (2014) remarked that It is not contestable that teacher education in Nigeria over the years has witnessed a series of reforms. In spite of these laudable reforms, the teacher education industry is still bedevilled with a multitude of challenges that might not allow the Sector to improve its level of contribution and enhanced role in the nation's development. Inadequate funding is one obvious challenge but other challenges include among others:

- **Defective admission process into teacher training institutions**
Okoli, Ogbondah, Abdullahi (2015); Lawal (2014) observed that Education courses in our universities are always the last choice for prospective students, thereby becoming a "dumping ground" for those who lack both aptitude and interest to become teachers who are moulders of lives end up becoming teachers. The effect of this at post-graduation can be better imagined.
- **The daunting task on teacher gap for Education for All (EFA)**- Junaid (2013) revealed that while 9.1 million teachers are needed between 2008 & 2015 to achieve Education For All (EFA), teacher requirement projections between 2005 and the same Y2015 is far below this future need. A total of 7.2 million new teachers are also expected to replace teachers leaving their post either on retirement or outright leaving for greener pasture.
- **Teacher-pupil ratio/Teacher-student ratio**
Closely related to this issue of the nation's inability to meet the projection of teachers' supply, is the issue of teacher-pupil ratio (TPR or TSR), which is currently very far from being met by most States in Nigeria, that is, 1:36 at primary. According to Vanguard Newspaper (6th October, 2016), many teachers, especially in public schools work in overcrowded classrooms with 80 to 100 students and without electricity and furniture.

▪ **Teacher attrition rate**

The outflow or number of teachers leaving the profession is also referred to as teacher attrition. There are many reasons for attrition including retirement, change in professions, change in responsibilities or level of education and illness or death.

▪ **Rigidity in the role of practising teachers**

Teachers in many Nigerian schools over the years have been treating knowledge as a “given” - external reality existing outside the learners and embedded in textbooks”, whereas they are supposed to see knowledge as essentially a human construct, where the teacher acts as facilitator of children’s learning, and mediating agent through who the Curriculum is transacted.

▪ **Low teacher motivation**

Ibidapo-Obe (2007) says this is often reflected in teacher apathy, lack of commitment, absenteeism, and relatively high labour turnover. With this, it becomes pretty difficult for the teachers to give their best and this has been adversely affecting the contribution of the teacher education industry to national development over the years. A typical case in question is the 22.5% increment in teachers’ salary scale, which some States have outrightly refused to honour or the irregularity in the payment of monthly salaries of teachers by many State governments in Nigeria. This makes it difficult to retain top quality personnel required to function in the educational system, especially at the primary and secondary levels.

▪ **Disinclination for teacher education programmes**

Obanya (2006) observed that one clear evidence of the declining social status of the teaching profession is the rising disinclination for teacher education courses in Nigerian higher institutions. This is evident in the statistics presented in Table 2 and Figure 1 of this paper.

Table 2: Higher Education Institutions Students’ Preferences – Matriculation Examinations

YEARS	UME	%	MPCE	%	TOTAL
2007	911,679	84.5	167,836	15.5	1,079,515
2008	1,192,050	79.4	310,022	20.6	1,502,072
2009	1,184,651	77.5	342,908	22.5	1,527,559
2010	1,330,531	76.7	45,140	13.3	1,375,671

Source: Adapted from Shu’ara (2010)

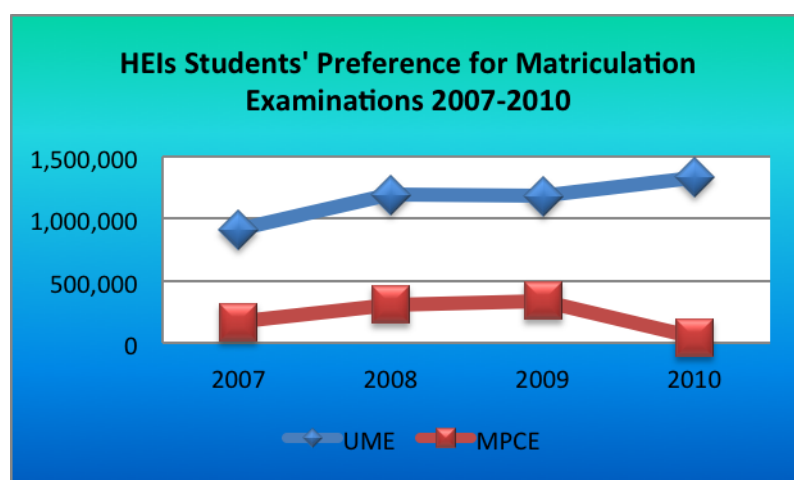


Figure 1: HEIs Students Preference for Matriculation Examinations (2007-2010) –Lawal, 2011

The situation did not even change in Y2016, as JAMB (2017) revealed that while a total of 1, 407,162 candidates applied for admission into the universities for various courses; 4.8% of who applied for Education, only 17, 673 applied to read NCE courses.

Moja (2000) in his remarks, supported this view on disinclination by saying that the fact that teachers have become marginalised and the profession is relatively the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force in Nigeria, makes conditions of their work environment very poor with little access to information and resources needed, and accompanied with extremely poor benefits. Teachers are also known to rarely enjoy the same work environment compared with other professions.

Teachers and role conflict

Many practising teachers of today are known to have divided loyalty to their profession. This is due to their involvement in some other activities in an attempt to make sure that they keep pace with their daily needs. This challenge has gone a long way in jeopardising the quality of the service delivered by such teachers in the field.

The near non-existing professional culture in education

Members of the teaching profession have less flair for interacting with their colleagues during their training, in their places of employment, within their professional association and also informally. A lack of this culture prevents them from having a distinctive culture that could serve as a source of professional solidarity, self-esteem, and self-consciousness as well as unity.

Teacher education and teachers' low level of IT skills

The entire world is gradually becoming a global village where teachers just like other professionals have to imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the developed countries in order to improve their on the job performance. Unfortunately, the teacher preparation programme in Nigeria can be said to still relatively lack this unique component which is expected to prepare the pre-service teacher for post-graduation, as there is insufficient knowledge, skills and use of IT by their trainers.

These challenges have further complicated the opportunity to deliver qualitative teacher education within the past years. This does not however mean that we cannot make the teacher education industry contribute more significantly to national development as it is a profession that has high prospect if better managed.

VI. The Prospects of Teacher Education industry in Nigeria

The teacher is an important player in the quality of education of any nation. The teacher is more directly related to the development of the future of any nation than any other profession, hence it was noted that, "...the teacher will need greater depth of knowledge, increased skills, a broad knowledge of contemporary civilisation, right attitude and ideas, improved human characteristics and relationship through quality teacher education..." (Braimoh, (2010). They are the last post to translate government policies and intentions into practice.

The plethora of challenges highlighted in the preceding paragraphs are however capable of querying the quality and prospects of the teacher education industry in Nigeria if they are not properly addressed by its stakeholders.

Some of the policies, plans and corresponding scenarios that could help boost the prospects of the teacher education industry would include:

- a. A complete review of the teacher education programme in Nigeria by the stakeholders to accommodate benchmarks and standards for quality teacher education as it obtains in developed countries like Australia, the USA and United Kingdom. Here, the curriculum will allow for a well-grounded curriculum which will describe professional standards for teachers as an aspirational framework to be used to formulate goals and extend their own learning in order to strengthen classroom practice (The Department of Training and Arts, in the state of Queensland, Australia. 2006), .
- b. A refocus on curriculum content areas that address child and adolescent development and learning, an understanding of the social and cultural contexts, information technology as well as integrated practice, against the current practice that is more theoretical, before certificates are issued as qualified teachers.
- c. A more definitive refinement of the NCCE Specialist Teachers Programme introduced in Y2013 which will require specialisation by level, that is, special preparation of teachers for levels; primary, junior

secondary, senior secondary and so on will contribute to the building of a befitting professional status for anybody who chooses to become a teacher at any of this level. This is very possible if the practice is complemented with improved welfare packages

- d. The prospect is also better assured where the training curriculum is structured to incorporate the new environment in schools and the classrooms in terms of constructivist learning, learner-centred instruction and integration of technology into the process of teaching and learning.
- e. True professionalization of the teaching profession which will involve an extended deadline within a convenient time-frame by the TRCN for all teachers to become certified before they can practice, complimented with strict compliance and monitoring, can make the profession to become a better valued one.
- f. An immediate consideration of the implementation of the National Teacher Education Policy will equally guarantee a better prospect for the teaching profession. A vital provision of the policy that emphasises one-year internship for under-graduate pre-service teachers in form of a clinical experience will equip the trainees better for the job while in training. They will become better exposed to better-supervised practicum and student-teaching opportunities supported by newly emerging technologies. This position is shared by the National Research Council (1996) which noted that one of the standard benchmarks is that, "...Pre-service program coordination requires mechanisms and strategies for connecting and integrating courses (programmes), pedagogy courses, and clinical experiences (i.e., experiences in schools and classrooms)..."
- g. Deliberate institutionalisation of quality assurance mechanisms as directed by the NCCE, which requires the establishment of a Quality Assurance Directorate to be manned by qualified staff will go a long way in ensuring that all the academic and non-academic activities in teachers college are better quality-controlled. The possibility of improved performance with corresponding better graduate outputs can be more realisable.
- h. A review of the teacher recruitment policy, which allows for top-rated graduates in education to be hired after rigorous selection process into the profession will enhance the prospect of the profession. It is happening in some other parts of the world e.g. Singapore, where the recruitment of new student teachers is limited to the top one-third of each graduating cohort (MOE, Singapore, 2010). This can also be complimented with improved welfare packages and ethical standards like mode dressing, conduct etc. that must be maintained on assumption of duty. A similar foundation would have been put in place at admission where the best brains and not dropouts are admitted for training.
- i. Integration of a deliberate IT policy into teacher preparation programme through the development of a unique ICT intervention in the training of teachers would facilitate more functional and meaningful teaching and learning. It will also make the teachers love their jobs more and become more interested in the profession.
- j. Lawal (2016) is of the opinion that an improved classroom climate is an important factor of teacher motivation. In a situation where the teacher experiences the classroom as safe, healthy, and a happy place to operate, with supportive resources and facilities for teaching and optimal learning, he/she is likely to be more productive and proud of the profession.
- k. High quality staff development demands that practising teachers must be availed opportunities for regular acquisition of skills and knowledge of 21st Century learning tools that can help make them use feedback from their learners to improve their performances in the classrooms. Expectedly, the standards for pre-service teachers' professional learning deserve the need for a holistic curriculum in the teacher education programmes which includes developing conceptual and pedagogical understanding and the encouragement of appropriate attitudes and beliefs associated with character and learning. Such standards would integrate the learning in all aspects of teacher education (contents in knowledge areas, methodologies, education studies and teaching practice) and continuity between pre-service education and induction into the profession.
- l. A teacher education model committed to preparing excellent teachers and one that has clearly defined what an excellent teacher needs to know and be able to do will assure the industry a better prospect. This is particularly when such model is translated into a coherent, integrated, comprehensive, and up-to-date curriculum

VII. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to review the state of the teacher education industry in Nigeria. Teaching has been presented as the most vital and strategic profession for national development in Nigeria just like all other countries of the world. Specifically, some of the limitations in the teacher education industry in Nigeria pointed out the fact that there were elements of insufficient professional learning for student teachers and inadequate

support for teacher education programmes. Gaps that have really constrained the quality of service delivery in the industry were highlighted alongside the corresponding challenges.

This however does not mean that the teacher education industry in Nigeria today has not experienced much improvement. Nevertheless, the industry still demands some attention, particularly in the area of achieving quality teacher preparation; proper professionalization of teachers as obtained in other recognised professions, standards for induction, improved welfare package, and continuous professional development, to make teachers as effective as possible.

The prospects of the industry will be better assured where teachers are assisted to develop the capacity to design and implement new ways of learning and supported with the development of innovative best practices underpinned by digital technologies. One would like to conclude this presentation by using Prof. Peter Okebukola's comment to assure us all that the teacher education industry really has a great prospect. The Vanguard Newspaper (6th October, 2016) quoted him as saying that;

*If we assert that teachers make up the fulcrum
of the education lever, the conclusion is that,
the story of Nigeria's development over the last
56 years is largely the story of its teachers. Hence,
if the quality of teachers is taken out of our
equation, Nigeria is likely to be the backwaters
of nations of the world.*

So all hands must be on deck to improve the quality of service delivered by the teacher education industry in Nigeria. On-going professional development programmes for teacher trainers in Colleges would need to be intensified to support and develop a richer and contemporary understanding of their discipline and teaching pedagogies. The pre-service and in-service teachers are to be prepared as good users of the curriculum, so as to become better focused about meeting the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian child as prescribed by the National Policy on Education (2014).

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